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# HOME MISSIONS TODAY

AN ADDRESS BY

REV. WILLIAM ROBERT KING, PH.D., D.D.  
*Secretary, Board of Home Missions*

TO

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF  
THE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN THE U. S. A.  
WINONA LAKE, INDIANA  
MAY, 1921



*Board of Home Missions  
Presbyterian Church in the U. S. A.  
156 Fifth Avenue, New York*

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MR. MODERATOR, FATHERS AND BRETHREN:

I bring to you the greetings of the Board of Home Missions.

The Board comes to you today with a spirit of gratitude and rejoicing. We have closed one of the greatest years in the history of Home Missions. It has been a year of anxiety and struggle but a year of victory. In spite of all the unrest and reactions of these strenuous times, Home Missions have gone forward with unusual success. Our printed report is in your hands; you will find there a full account of all receipts, expenditures and accomplishments during the past year. With thanksgiving to God we submit this report.

It is with peculiar pleasure that we call your special attention to two items in this report:

*First*, the gratifying increase in the membership of our Home Mission churches. The net gain last year was ten per cent of the total membership of the Church, the larger part of which was on confession of faith. Alaska heads the list with an increase of thirty-six and one-half per cent. Our Mexican churches come next with an increase of twenty-two per cent, and Porto Rico follows with an increase of twenty and one-half per cent. This has been one of the best years the Board has ever had in its evangelistic work. The evangelistic returns from the seventeen aid-receiving Synods were more than three times the general average from the whole Church. This unusual increase is indicative of the new spirit of evangelism that is taking hold of the Church.

*The Second* item we would have you note is the increase in the salaries of our home missionaries. We have reached an average for all departments of the Board of \$1,430. We have not yet attained the high mark of a minimum of \$1,500 and manse, but repenting of "the things that are past, we are pressing on toward the mark of this high calling."

My desire, however, is not to review the past but to point to the future. I want to speak of four things:

The Task of Home Missions as the Board sees it.

The Board's Program in terms of the Task.

The Board's Needs as it faces the Task.

The Board's Faith as it goes forward with the Task.

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## I.

### THE TASK OF HOME MISSIONS AS THE BOARD SEES IT

is "to help make and keep America Christian for the redemption of mankind and the friendly service of the world."

We have so defined our task and adopted this as our slogan. It is, we confess, an ambitious purpose in the face of present day world conditions but not more ambitious or optimistic than Peter, when he wrote to the dispersed and discouraged church of his day, saying: "Nevertheless, we according to his promise, look for a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness." Or John when he wrote, as a prisoner on Patmos, during the terrible persecutions of his day: "I saw a new earth."

Never was the task of Christianizing America so big and baffling as it is today. As the country is larger and more complex, by so much is our task more difficult and stupendous. Nevertheless nothing short of the complete Christianization of this great country should be the goal of the Christian Church. Any conception of the Church's task that falls short of this is untrue to Him "who would have all men to be saved" and all nations brought into the kingdom of God.

## II.

### THE BOARD'S PROGRAM HAS BEEN BUILT IN THE TERMS OF THIS TASK

We are trying to approach the task of Christianizing America along three definite lines, which we conceive to be the outstanding functions of our Board.

#### 1. Along the line of Evangelization.

The first thing in our program is the evangelization of America; the giving of the gospel to the whole population of the whole country; the winning of men and women to Christ. For this the Board was organized more than a hundred years ago. For this the people give their money and for this our consecrated missionaries give their lives. Nation-wide evangelization is our first and supreme task.

It is not necessary to argue the point before the Commissioners of a General Assembly that America has not been adequately

evangelized. Yet it is a fact that is not appreciated by the Church at large. Do you, my brethren, realize that there are more than eight times as many people in the United States today, who are not being reached by any church than the entire population of the country when the Board of Home Missions was organized in 1802? It seems incredible that after these one hundred and nineteen years we should still have fifty-eight millions of people, more than half of our entire population, who are not in any church, Protestant, Catholic or Jewish. We can scarcely believe those who tell us that there are twenty-seven millions of children in America who are not in any Sunday School. I have been astonished to learn as I have gone up and down the land during the last two years that there are great sections of country and large groups of population that have not been evangelized. Why even the great state of Illinois, the home of Lincoln and Grant, has one county without a church building within its borders. There are great groups of population also in the United States that have not yet been evangelized and among some of them paganism is as rank as can be found among the so-called heathen nations across the seas. We have but to study the conditions among the one and three-quarter million Mexicans in the Southwest; among the three hundred and forty thousand Indians upon the Reservations; among the three and a half million Highlanders in our mountain sections; among the three and a half million Jews in our large eastern cities; among the hundred thousand Orientals on the Pacific Coast; among the million or more migrants that make their annual pilgrimages across the Continent; and among the sixteen million aliens within our borders, crowded principally into our great cities, to realize the sinful inadequacy of American evangelization.

From Portland, Maine, to Portland, Oregon; from Point Barrow in Alaska to Cuba, Porto Rico and Santo Domingo, we find unoccupied fields and unevangelized groups of people. These unreached millions are our immediate American responsibility and opportunity. They are the ripened harvest fields into which the Lord would have us thrust the reapers. They are the scattered multitudes, like sheep without shepherds, upon whom the Lord is looking with compassion. They are the nation's menace and the Church's challenge.

The Board is doing its best with its limited resources of men and money to reach these multitudes and win them to Christ and the Church. We have carried forward the work this past year in two thousand eight hundred and three distinct missionary enterprises, with sixteen hundred and ninety-two ministers and special workers who have been preaching the Gospel in forty-two different languages and dialects. When we add to this the missionary work being carried on by the Self-Sustaining Synods and the Woman's Board it comprises more than one-half of the entire work of our Church.

2. In the second place, we are seeking to approach the Home Mission Task of Christianizing America through agencies of Religious Education and Spiritual Training.

America must be given a new mind as well as a new heart. Our great trouble in this country, both in State and in the Church, is not so much bad feeling as bad thinking. As a man thinketh so is he. As a nation thinks so is it. In our wonderful advance in secular learning during the last century, we have created one of our most serious problems. We have set the whole nation of one hundred million souls thinking. *Thought* is one of the most precious things in the world but it is one of the most dangerous things in the world. It is dynamite! It is the most powerful explosive we know anything about. A hundred million people listless and stupid, may be a care but a hundred million people awake and intellectually active, are a problem. Knowledge is power—power for good or power for evil,—according to the kind of knowledge. Ignorance would be bliss, if our wisdom is to be folly. It is not that people are thinking that alarms us. It is that so many are thinking badly. It is not that the people have come to know so much that gives us concern. It is that they have come to know so much that is not true. The most deadly vices are perverted virtues. Thought is God's greatest gift to man. Rightly guided and used it lifts him to heaven. Wrongly directed and abused it sinks him to hell. It was a reading, thinking Germany that brought on the World's War. It was the reading, thinking elements of Russia that invented Bolshevism. It is an awakened, thinking Orient that is creating the "Yellow Peril," if such there be. Emerson said: "Let men beware when God lets loose a thinker on the earth." America's

greatest peril today is an awakened mind without a spiritual vision. She has a fund of knowledge of facts and things without an understanding of forces and principles. Benjamin Kidd said a quarter of a century ago, that "Science stands confronting the problems of our time without any clear faith of her own. Her work has been wonderfully complete within the area which it covered but that area was very narrow."

The Church must guide the thinking of America. Next to the winning of men to the person of Christ is the winning of men to the mind and thought of Christ. Not until America comes to have the mind of the Master will our problems be solved. He is the only unifying force in the nation or in the world. We can never Americanize except as we Christianize. We can never settle our differences except as we see them in the light of Christ. We can never bring the foreigners, who are amongst us, to our Anglo Saxon mind, except we bring ourselves and them to the mind of Christ. The Church's supreme leadership today must be along this line of guiding the thought of America as it is itself guided by the thought of the Master. O, how much America needs the mind of Christ! His religious mind, his social mind, his ethical mind, his world mind!

3. In the third place, we are trying to approach our task through definite forms of Christian service. The Church must teach saved men how to build a saved society. The institutions and relationships of men must be made Christian. The Church must assume her proper place of leadership in preaching and practicing the social gospel of Christ. The Assembly has committed to our Board the responsibility of keeping before the Church this phase of American Christianization. It is one of the functions of the Board. Through all the departments of our organization we hope to become more and more a service agency in the Synods, Presbyteries and local communities for working out programs of service which will enable the Church to better fulfill our Lord's great commission to teach people to "Observe all things whatsoever he has commanded" and that will enable us better to answer our own prayer: "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

### III.

#### WE COME NOW TO THE NEEDS OF THE BOARD AS IT FACES THE TASK

First of all and most of all, the Board needs and asks the prayers of the Church. This whole task of Home Missions is a spiritual undertaking. Above all else we need and must have the prayers of the people of our great denomination. We do not resent your criticisms but we do request your prayers. We trust you will not be so displeased with our failures that you will refuse to implore God for our success.

Organization will never accomplish the task. Methods and movements will never Christianize America. It is not by might or by power, by money or machinery, but by the *spirit of the Lord* that this thing is to be accomplished. We have tried organization. We have tried movements. We have tried propaganda. Has the time not come now to try *prayer*? When Ezekiel preached to the Valley of Dry Bones, they came together in perfect formation. They became splendidly organized. Bone came to its bone. Flesh and skin covered them over. The organization was complete but there was no life in them. Organized but inorganic: in form and fashion as men, but as dead and inactive as a graveyard. Then the Prophet prayed: "Come, oh breath and breathe upon these slain that they may live!" And the Spirit came and breathed into them the breath of God and they lived and stood up an exceeding great and mighty army. Has the time not come as we look out over the valley of a war-wrecked world and behold the uncoffined death about us, to punctuate our preaching with more prayer?

When Colonel Hampton, during the war with the Cherokee Indians, fought the battle of the Blue Ridge on September 13, 1776, he gave this command to his famous backwoodsmen: "Loaded guns advance! Empty guns fall down and load!" Fathers and Brethren, has the time not come in our battle, when the empty guns should fall down and load? I hope this Assembly will send out to the Church an S. O. S. call for prayer!

Our next need in carrying out the program of Home Missions is *Men*.

From all quarters and sections are coming constantly the call for properly qualified men. This is the burden upon the hearts of our Synodical Superintendents. Vacant churches and new fields are calling for men and the men cannot be found. We are told that at least five thousand preachers are needed today in America and only eleven hundred are graduating this year from Theological Seminaries of all denominations. To help meet this need our Board has organized a Recruiting Department and is offering to enter into contracts with young seminary men, covering a term of years, assuring them a career and support in home mission work. But we must first get the men into the seminaries preparing for this service. How and where can we find these young men? Brethren of the ministry, we must look to you. The pastor holds the solution of this problem in his hands more than any other person. The pastor is the best recruiting agent for the ministry. Brethren, are you laying this matter on the hearts of your young men? Let us remember it is not what we say about the high calling of the preacher that influences the young men. It is what we are ourselves in our profession; what we are doing in it that attracts or repels the young men of thought and ambition. The preacher himself is the first hope of the Church in the matter of winning recruits. The most powerful persuasive for the ministry is the preacher who is magnifying his office and adorning his calling. I do not know that I had ever heard a sermon or an address to young men on the claims of the ministry before I had decided the question for myself but I was fortunate in having for my pastor a man of God, who was a constant challenge to all that was best within me, and when I began to think about my life work, he stood out before me as my ideal and model. When the little Home Mission Church, in which I was reared, was fifty-two years old, I was the fifty-second young man it had sent into the ministry. It was due primarily to the type of pastors we had during those years. We cannot expect our young men to go into the ministry unless we—who are preachers—are so lifted up that we shall draw them.

Our third great need, as we approach the task of Christianizing America, is *money*. This is not our greatest need. It does not compare with our need of prayer and men, but it is a real need.

#### WE NEED MONEY FOR OUR DEBT

During the war period we were compelled to accumulate a deficit. This was unavoidable without sinful injury to the work and great injustice to our missionaries. There are some things worse than debt. Disloyalty, lack of courage or unwillingness to bear burdens during a crisis are far more reprehensible than a deficit. In spite of strict economy, refusal of all new work and distressing retrenchments, we were compelled to close the last year with a current deficit. This was due almost entirely to two things. First, the over-draft of about \$50,000 on the part of four of the self-supporting Synods that used our Board's treasury, which amount, we are assured, will be refunded to the Board. The second cause of our current deficit was the unexpected call made upon the Boards by the last Assembly for the expenses of the New Era Movement after we had projected our budget for the year and made our pledges to the Synods and Presbyteries. Had it not been for these two things we would have come to the Assembly with very little if any current deficit.

#### WE NEED MONEY FOR THE PRESENT YEAR

We have built our budget with great self-restraint and on the smallest possible basis. We have undertaken no new work. We have made every possible saving. We have eliminated work and workers. We have cut our budget down to the bleeding point and we come now, asking the Church for \$1,269,347.50.

#### WE NEED MONEY ALSO FOR NEW WORK

We need money for buildings. One-third of the entire budget for Cuba goes for rent on buildings in which to preach the Gospel. We have twenty-two centers in Cuba where there are no buildings. This is poor business as well as bad religion. In face of the ever-expanding opportunities we have been compelled for two successive years to refuse all new work. How long shall the Board be forced to follow this policy of the status quo? Vacant fields are calling for preachers; hospitals are asking for doctors and nurses; schools are begging for teachers. We must answer these calls. The harvest is ripe. We must thrust in the reapers. Don't ask us to make bricks without straw. Fathers and Brethren, will you not make it possible for us to go forward?

#### IV.

Now I come to the fourth thing I want to mention:

#### THE BOARD'S CONFESSION OF FAITH AS IT GOES FORWARD WITH THE TASK

And, first of all, we believe in our task. We believe that the most urgent and immediate task of the Church is the making of America Christian.

America must be Christianized for her own sake. Paganism is rampant in our land. Fifty-eight millions of our people belong to no church, either Protestant or Catholic. No nation can long exist half Christian and half pagan. America must become Christian or ultimately go the way of all the pagan nations of history. The wonder is not that things are as bad as they are in America. The wonder is that things are as good as they are in America. Why should we be surprised at the radicalism in industry, government and religion when we allow more than half of our population to continue without the Gospel? Why do we express surprise at the deplorable conditions we are facing in this country when we tolerate the pagan ethics and pagan thought that have been pouring into our country for a century or more? This policy of indifference to the spiritual needs of these unsaved multitudes is not only poor religion but it is poor statesmanship. It is Christ or chaos for America. All other things have failed. There is no hope from our mere material civilization. All that we have accomplished in the way of education and invention will but hasten the day of our doom and add to the completeness of our undoing unless we can win America to Christ and enthrone him in the lives of men and in the relationships of society.

America must be made Christian also for the world's sake. America is the hope or the despair of the world. She holds in her hand the key to the world's future. No nation is so qualified for the moral and religious leadership of the world as America. Her very location on the globe; the character of her population, cosmopolitan and internationally-minded, as no other people; the genius of her democratic institutions, and her marvelous wealth and unlimited resources, fit her for leadership such as no other nation enjoys or can possibly attain unto. World peace, the

future of democracy and all that is best and highest in the world's life, rests largely in the keeping of America.

Our great Foreign Missionary enterprise also depends upon the Christianization of America. How can a pagan occident Christianize a heathen orient? How can we remove the mote out of our brother's eye unless we take the beam out of our own eye? They tell us the great guns used in our army and navy must be 1,500 times heavier than the projectiles they shoot. So it must be with the Church and the nation. An unconverted America can never become a redemptive force in a lost world. A Japanese statesman once said: "Christianity is discredited because of its seeming impotency in America." America will never be able to project influence across the sea that will batter down the walls of ancient sins until her own battlements have been enlarged and her spiritual guns set in turrets of righteousness.

In the second place, we believe in our Christ and in the saving power of his Gospel. He is equal to the task and the times. A New Era, yes, but not newer than the Gospel. A modern day, yes, but no more modern than Christ. Before we came into the new world era, he had been there ahead of us. Before our new problems were born he had worked out their solution. Before the world war had cursed the earth, he had suggested the terms of lasting peace. There is no one so up-to-date as Jesus. The mountain climber, with great effort and much risk of life, clambers to the top of the snow-capped peak, hoping to be the first human being to set foot on its lofty summit, only to find the flag planted there by other daring adventurers who preceded him, and to discover around his feet the empty cans and charred coals that mock his vain ambitions. So it is in our national and world life. There is no peak of human experience Christ has not ascended, no mountain of difficulty he has not explored. He is the world's great Pathfinder, the undaunted Pioneer, who has ascended the heights and from his lofty summit beckons us on and up.

In the third place, we believe in the Church, "against which the gates of hell shall not prevail." And while we maintain a broad

catholicity and deplore any sectarian bigotry, we believe also in the Presbyterian Church and in her historic faith in a sovereign God, a divine Christ, a regenerating Holy Spirit, an inspired Bible and a social Christianity. We believe that Presbyterianism has a message for this age that is especially needed. It has stood historically for the immanence of God in the world, for intelligence in religion, for democracy in government and for the application of religion to life and society.

This age needs such a creed; this age needs Calvinism, not its adulterations but the Calvinism of Calvin, the Calvinism which in the words of a recent writer "Did breed neither ignorance, poverty nor privilege, but has ever been the nurse of heroes and the mother of free republics, representative governments and liberty safe-guarded by law." We need some of the Calvinism of Knox that will create within us such a passion for pure government and human liberty that we will cry out: "Give me America or I die."

We believe also in the coming victory of the Church in America. The time has come when we must set ourselves against the spirit of defeat and the wave of pessimism that is sweeping over the Church. The prophets of failure are plentiful in the land. The weeping Jeremiahs are crying from the housetops. Brethren, we must not become panic-stricken. We are not fighting a losing battle. We are not prolonging a dying agony. We are not dragging our famishing bodies through burning sands and beneath blistering suns in a vain effort to reach a delusive mirage. We are the conquering soldiers of a winning Lord who never knew defeat. When the preacher of Ecclesiastes looked about him and surveyed all things beneath the sun he was discouraged and concluded that all was vanity and vexation of spirit and surrendered in defeat, but when the seer of Patmos made a survey of things in heaven he was heartened and shouted: "Hallelujah, I see a new earth!" Brethren, look up—take courage, preach the gospel of hope! Sound the note of victory!



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